

EDITORIAL

"THE CROPPING SYSTEM IN THE SOUTH."

Prof. Massey directs attention to an important subject in his article on "The Cropping System in the South" in this number of *The Progressive Farmer*. With the increasing advantages of country life and the advancing prices for farm products, a larger number of young men of business and executive ability are likely to turn henceforth to the old plantation system of farming. And such young men—especially if their native ability be reinforced by special agricultural training—are likely to reap richer rewards than they would obtain in any city business. We wish to encourage every young man in the ambition to own his own home and to sit beneath his own vine and fig tree. But the fact remains that there are many young white men who have no such ambition, and it is almost invariably better for such persons to work as croppers under the direction of an efficient and competent plantation manager than to "piddle" for themselves with poor tools and poor methods. Then we have many thousands of negroes, without initiative, and utterly lacking in ability to manage for themselves, butchering the land and getting only starvation returns for their labor. Put in charge of an intelligent and enterprising farm manager, better crops would be raised, soil fertility maintained and better profits obtained for all concerned.

In this connection we are reminded of a notable article written by Dr. Ulrich B. Phillips, now of the University of Wisconsin, for the July, 1903, number of the *South Atlantic Quarterly*. The following extracts from that article will be of interest to those who wish to give the plantation idea further study:

"The present system of renting, or cropping, can be but temporary. Under it the negro is superintended in but a half-hearted way. Whenever he fails to raise a good crop and to sell it at a good price, he involves his landlord and his creditor with himself in a common embarrassment. Furthermore, the average negro cannot maintain himself as an independent farmer, because his ignorance, indolence, and instability prevent him from managing his own labor in an efficient way.

"The most promising solution of the problem is the re-establishment of the old plantation system, with some form of hired labor instead of slave labor. The whole tendency of American industry is toward organization for more efficient management. It is a dead loss for a good manager to have no managing to do. It is also a dead loss for a laborer who needs management to have no management. The most successful grain farms in the West are really plantations, where great gangs of men and machines work under a single direction. A system of small farms in the South would be an unprofitable reaction from a better system in the past. It would be a lessening of the net output in the staples and in grain, meat, and dairy products. It is necessary to bring Southern industry in agriculture as well as in manufacturing to a modern progressive basis; and the plantation system seems to be the most efficient for the purpose.

"I am acquainted with a gentleman, born and reared upon a cotton plantation in Troup County, Georgia, who moved to Atlanta, upon reaching manhood, and established himself in business. He achieved moderate success, but always felt that yearning for the soil which is felt by so many Southerners away from the plantation. At length he resolved to return to the country and apply, with hired labor, the methods of cotton raising which his father had applied in ante-bellum days. He bought a tract of land in the Alabama cotton belt, built comfortable cabins, hired several negro families, selected the best of modern implements and fertilizers, and by good management

made such a success that capitalists have offered to buy an unlimited amount of land for him if he will undertake to organize upon it a modern plantation system. A number of other men have received instruction from his example, and his whole community is tending to change from the renting and cropping system to the system of the plantation. This is not an isolated case; but seems to be an earnest of a general movement. The great new peach orchards of middle Georgia further illustrate the recent tendency toward the plantation system and its adaptation to a variety of crops.

"When the plantation comes to be re-established predominantly in the fertile parts of the South, it will bring order out of the existing chaos. By introducing system in place of haphazard work, it will lower the cost of production, increase the output, and enable the South to produce a greater amount of its food and other needed supplies. . . . The hope of the South is in the application of the principle of the division of labor to agricultural production."

DEATH OF "HARRY FARMER."

The thousands of readers of *The Progressive Farmer* will sorrow with the editorial management of the paper in the news of the death of "Harry Farmer," (Mr. Henry Wyche, of Columbus County), which occurred at Whiteville Saturday. Mr. Wyche had been suffering from cancer for several months. By his "Harry Farmer Talks" in *The Progressive Farmer*, he proved himself one of the very best agricultural writers in all the South, and did a great deal to promote more progressive farming methods. The world is poorer for his untimely death, and we extend to the bereaved family our deepest sympathy. Mr. Wyche was only 44 years of age.

THIS WEEK'S PAPER—SOME RANDOM COMMENT.

The most notable agricultural feature of this number is the article on "Crib Selection of Seed Corn," by M. C. B. Williams. It is one of those exceptionally valuable articles that make the reader say, "Well, that letter by itself is worth the price of a year's subscription." We hope that no farmer on our list will plant his corn before giving Mr. Williams' article a careful reading and making an earnest effort to follow its counsel. It means dollars in the farmer's pocket. Not the least important part is that in regard to germinating tests.

Among our other agricultural features we note Mr. R. C. Whitener's letter reporting his experience in growing corn and peas—one of those practical, common sense letters that we should like to get in dozen lots every week; Dr. Burkett's sensible comment on the breeds of hogs; "Reader's" protest against some practices that are more general than we could wish; "Poultryman's" article on keeping books, and another chapter each from Messrs. Sherman and Cates.

We have been especially impressed by the *Gastonia Gazette's* comment on "The Grown Man Who Can't Read," and we are reproducing it on page 6 in the hope that it may lead the reader to speak in this earnest but encouraging manner to some acquaintance who has failed to improve his opportunities for learning to read. How would you like to be deaf to half the people you meet? And yet the man who cannot read is deaf to half the voices that speak to men and women to-day. That a man should remain content with such deafness sounds unreasonable. Read Editor Marshall's article, and bring the matter to the attention of some one in need of such counsel. It may be that he has been waiting for just such a message as this to get him to make the effort to educate himself. This is a great opportunity for doing good.

We are glad to note that Congress has passed the bill increasing the salaries of mail carriers from \$600 to \$720 a year. The measure will doubtless pass the Senate without opposition.

A FORWARD STEP BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

A distinct step forward has been made by our State Board of Agriculture in the election of Prof. H. H. Hume, as Horticulturist of the Department. Heretofore our trucking and fruit-growing interests have not had the attention they deserved at the hands of the Department, and the creation of this new office and the election of Prof. Hume to fill it means much for these important branches of agricultural work.

Prof. Hume is a native of Canada, but has for five years occupied the chair of horticulture and botany in the Florida Agricultural College. In this position he has made a special study of trucking and vegetable growing for Northern markets. He will assume his new duties in North Carolina May 1st, going at once to the Eastern counties for work with strawberries, cabbage and potatoes. In the spring he will devote himself almost entirely to trucking problems, while in summer and fall he will look after the fruit interests of the central and western counties and attend farmers' institutes. Prof. Hume will also direct the horticultural tests at the several State test farms.

The truckers and fruit growers of the State are to be congratulated on this forward step of the Department.

BOOK REVIEWS

Probably the best selling novel to-day is "The Deliverance," by Ellen Glasgow, (Doubleday, Page & Co., Publishers, New York City). Some reviewers have called it a romance of the Virginia tobacco fields, and it is that. Some have called it a picture of the struggle between certain tendencies in the Old South and certain tendencies in the New; this is also a correct statement. But it is not as a romance of two lovers, nor as a portrayal of social conditions, that the book impressed us. More than anything else it is the tremendous epic of a human soul. Bill Fletcher robs the Blake family of their great plantation, of all their wealth, and young Christopher Blake, a mere boy at the time, surrenders himself to a mighty passion for revenge. It becomes the central fact of his life; he feeds on it by day, dreams of it by night. It leads to a terrible end, but Christopher, coming at last to see the folly and blackness of the work he had done, faces it squarely, and makes a fearful atonement by paying a penalty demanded only by the stern justice of an awakened conscience. It is a strong story and woven with it is a romance of a very unusual kind. Interspersed, too, are some delicious bits of humor and philosophy of which we give the following samples:

"The only rule for makin' a woman think yo' way is always to think hers."

"A man can't sow wild oats in one generation without having a volunteer crop spring up in the next."

"Ever since the Garden of Eden, men have taken a good deal mo' pleasure in layin' the blame on their wives than in layin' their blows to the devil."

"Lord! Lord! What's the use of bein' honest if you can't p'int your finger at them that ain't?"

"A woman can convince herself that black is white if she keeps trying hard enough—and it's marvelous that she never sees the difference between wanting to believe a thing and believing it in earnest."

"It was like many other marriages, I reckon; he got used to her body and never caught so much as a single glimpse of her soul."

"If you can't tell a polite lie, don't tell any."

"Regret is a dangerous thing, my boy; you let a little one no bigger than a mustard seed into your heart, and before you know it, you have hatched out a whole brood."

"When a man ain't got a wife or child to nag at, he's mighty sho' to turn right round an' begin naggin' at his neighbors, and that's why its the bounden duty of every decent woman to marry and save the peace."